

# **Courts Charter - The Royal Courts of Justice**

This leaflet sets out the standard of service you can expect from The Royal Courts of Justice. We have set these standards after talking to people who have used the court. We aim to provide an excellent, courteous service and when you come to court you can expect fair and equal treatment, no matter what your age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, gender or religious beliefs.

This Charter is about the administration of the court and not the decisions made by judges. You may be able to appeal to a higher court if you are unhappy about the outcome of your case. If you want to do so you should get legal advice. Please note that court staff are unable to give legal advice to customers.

## **If you are coming to court**

Before the date of your hearing you can ask to see the type of room, or court, where your case will be heard.

If you have a disability and you need help at your court hearing, please let us know in advance by speaking to a Customer Service Officer who will tell you how we can help you.

Please tell the Criminal Appeal Office if you need a foreign language interpreter for a criminal appeal and we will arrange one. We don't normally provide an interpreter for any other matter and you will need to arrange and pay for this yourself. The List Office for your case will tell you who you should contact if you need one.

The main building is open from 9am. The public counters or enquiry points are open from 10am to 4.30pm. Please note that smoking is strictly prohibited in any part of our buildings.

When you come to court you will find:

- courteous, polite, helpful staff wearing identity badges;
- clear signs to help you find your way around;
- information leaflets on display and a list of cases to be heard that day;
- a notice giving details of the Customer Service Officers who will be pleased to help you with any special needs, suggestions or complaints.

When you go to a public counter or enquiry point we will:

- respect your privacy;
- talk to you out of the hearing of other members of the public, if you prefer;
- use simple clear language and ensure all technical terms are explained;
- attend to your enquiry within 10 minutes or explain the delay if you have to wait longer.

You can contact us by phone Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm and we will:

- answer the phone promptly and helpfully;
- give the name of the person you are speaking to;
- give you a clear and helpful answer.

When you write to the court, and we need to reply, we will:

- write to you or phone you within 10 working days of receiving your letter;
- tell you who is writing and provide a phone number to contact them if you wish.

If you want to start a case we will:

- send out the documents relating to your case within 10 working days from receipt of your request;
- tell you the reference number of your case within 10 working days of the case being commenced;
- tell you the date you must come to court if this is appropriate.

We can give you forms and offer guidance on how to complete them but we cannot give you legal advice or tell you what to say. We won't be able to say if your case is likely to succeed, or tell you what the court will decide.

We can tell you how to get advice from a solicitor, Citizens Advice Bureau or other relevant agencies.

## **Legal Aid**

You should ask the Registrar of Criminal Appeals or the Criminal Appeal Office at The Royal Courts of Justice for information on legal aid in the Court of Appeal Criminal Division.

For other matters you can find out if you may be able to get legal aid to help pay your legal fees for representation by contacting:

The Legal Services Commission,  
85 Grays Inn Road,  
London WC1X 8TX  
  
Telephone: 020 7759 0000  
website: [www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk)

## **Community Legal Service**

CLS Direct, a free government funded service, will provide information on where you can obtain the type of legal advice you need.

Telephone: 0845 345 4345  
website: [www.clsdirect.org.uk](http://www.clsdirect.org.uk)

## **Personal Support Unit**

The PSU is an independent charity that provides a trained group of volunteers who support litigants in person, witnesses or victims of crime and their families and friends. They can accompany clients to court or around the building and offers both practical and emotional support. The PSU cannot give legal advice or fill in forms for clients.

There is an office in The Royal Courts of Justice. Please ask at reception for further information.

Telephone: 0207 947 7701  
website: [www.thepsu.co.uk](http://www.thepsu.co.uk)

## **Citizens Advice Bureau**

The CAB gives free, confidential, impartial and independent advice on a wide range of subjects, including debt, benefits, housing, legal matters, employment, immigration and consumer issues. There is a branch of the Citizens Advice Bureau in the Royal Courts of Justice,

RCJ Advice Bureau,  
Room M27,  
The Royal Courts of Justice,  
Strand,  
London WC2A 2LL  
Telephone Advice Line: 0845 1203715  
(recorded message)  
website: [www.rcjadvise.org.uk](http://www.rcjadvise.org.uk)

You can also contact the CAB regional office at:

Citizens Advice,  
Myddelton House,  
115-123 Pentonville Road,  
London N1 9LZ  
website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

## **Your Court hearing**

When you arrive at Court we will:

- show on a notice board where your case will be heard;
- arrange for you to wait apart from the other side's witnesses if there is no separate area. Please ask the court if you would prefer this;
- deal with your case as soon as possible. However, delays can happen, for example if the case before yours takes longer than planned.

If you have to wait we will:

- tell you regularly how much longer you may have to wait;
- tell you as quickly as possible if your case cannot be heard that day.

If we have to change the date of your hearing we will let you know as soon as possible.

## **Court decisions and orders**

The judge may hear your case in court or make a decision based on the documents relating to your case. We will send you an order setting out the courts decision within 10 working days from the date the decision was made.

If you and the other people involved in your case, or your legal representatives, have drawn up the order in your case then we will seal and send the order back to you. We will do this within 10 working days from the day we receive it.

## **Listening to you**

We welcome your comments and suggestions on how we could improve our service to you. We do this by:

- inviting you to fill in comment cards;
- carrying out local surveys;
- paying attention to all comments, complaints and suggestions;
- displaying information about our performance;
- displaying details in Court waiting areas of complaints and suggestions and what we have done to make improvements as a result of your feedback;
- displaying results of local surveys and changes we have made because of them.

If you have a complaint, please tell us as soon as possible and we will do our best to sort out the problem there and then. If you are still not happy, you can speak to a Customer Service Officer or write to the relevant Court Manager. We aim to resolve and respond to the complaint, giving you a full answer within 5 working days of receipt.

If you are still dissatisfied with the response given you may write to the appropriate Area Director at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London WC2A 2LL as follows:

The High Court Director's Office,  
Room TM 8.12  
Telephone: 020 7947 7369  
Fax: 020 7947 7656

The Court of Appeal Director's Office  
Room E326  
Telephone: 020 7947 6017  
Fax: 020 7947 7495

The Area Director aims to resolve and respond to the complaint, giving you a full answer within 10 working days.

A leaflet called "I want to complain – what should I do" is available. For more information please ask one of the court staff or visit our website at:

[www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk](http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk)

We welcome suggestions and compliments too.

Whilst we can investigate complaints about how a judge, master or registrar behaved in court we cannot investigate anything to do with their judgment, their assessment of a case or overturn any of their decisions.

Information about how to make a complaint about the personal conduct of judges, masters or registrars is available on the web:

[www.judicialcomplaints.gov.uk](http://www.judicialcomplaints.gov.uk)

Such complaints may be sent in writing to:

Office for Judicial Complaints (OJC),  
4th Floor, Clive House,  
70 Petty France,  
London SW1H 9HD  
Telephone: 020 7189 2937  
Fax: 020 7189 2936

Your letter should include the name of the judge and court, your case number and the hearing date together with the specific details of the conduct about which you are complaining.

Although we cannot look into complaints about solicitors, barristers or any other organisation, you may find the following addresses useful:

## **Solicitors**

Consumer Complaints Service,  
The Law Society,  
Victoria Court, 8 Dormer Place,  
Leamington Spa,  
Warwickshire CV32 5AE

Helpline: 0845 608 6565  
Textphone: 0845 601 1682  
Fax: 01926 431435  
email: [enquiries@lawsociety.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lawsociety.org.uk)  
website: [www.oss.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.oss.lawsociety.org.uk)

## **Barristers**

If you would like a complaint form please write to:

The Complaints Department,  
The General Council of the Bar,  
Northumberland House,  
289-293 High Holborn,  
London WC1V 7HZ

Telephone: 020 7242 0082  
Fax: 020 7611 1342  
email: [complaints@barcouncil.org.uk](mailto:complaints@barcouncil.org.uk)  
website: [www.barcouncil.org.uk](http://www.barcouncil.org.uk)